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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8238
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RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0128
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 000314

SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR WHA/BSC (KBEAMER)
NSC FOR GTOMASULO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2018

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DELIVERS RESPONSE ON POISONED WINE CASE

REF: MONTEVIDEO 00197

Classified By: Ambassador Frank E. Baxter
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) On May 14, the Ambassador delivered a letter on behalf of President Bush to the Foreign Minister which responds to President Vazquez' earlier request (reftel) for USG cooperation in the release of pertinent documents related to the death of Mrs. Cecilia Fontana de Heber in Uruguay in 1978. Fourteen declassified documents were also attached. The letter indicates that the USG possesses no additional information that would be helpful in identifying those responsible for Mrs. Heber's death. ForMin Fernandez thanked the Ambassador for the USG's help in resolving this long standing murder case which continues to have political repercussions. He promised to immediately forward the letter and documents to President Vazquez.

¶2. (C) During the meeting, the Ambassador also took the opportunity to raise the unsolved murder case of OPS/AID law enforcement officer Daniel A. Mitrione who died at the hands of the Tupamaro guerrillas in August 1970. He recalled that the USG has not forgotten about this crime against a U.S. citizen and that the perpetrators remain at large. The Ambassador noted that one of the unrepentant, self-admitted participants in the Mitrione killing is Dr. Henry Willy ENGLER Golovchenko, who currently resides in Uppsala, Sweden. He observed that Dr. Engler appears to be on the verge of "rehabilitation" in Uruguay, and has even been mentioned as a possible candidate for the Nobel Prize for his work on Alzheimer's disease. He said that it would be "unfortunate" should Engler ever be placed in a position within the GOU, because it would inevitably complicate U.S./Uruguayan bilateral relations. He urged Fernandez to release any files that the GOU might possess on the Mitrione case. The ForMin revealed his understanding in the matter.

¶3. (C) On May 21, President Vazquez telephoned the Ambassador to thank him for his assistance in the poisoned wine case. On May 22, an Associated Press article appeared under the (roughly translated) title of "U.S. Without Further Evidence in the Poisoned Wine Case". Subsequent to the AP article, some National (Blanco) party members publicly complained that they still believed the U.S. was withholding classified information, but the story seems to have lost its momentum since then.

¶4. (C) Comment: We are keeping our fingers crossed that the poisoned wine case has definitively been laid to rest. The excellent work at the NSC and the Department of State persuaded our interlocutors that we take President Vazquez' requests and his relationship with President Bush seriously,

even though we know that Vazquez was prompted to do so for domestic political reasons. Finally, the Ambassador raised the Mitrione case as a pushback on the poisoned wine case.

End Comment.

Baxter